

**DRAFT**

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**FOR**

**DOWNTOWN HEIGHT AND DENSITY CHANGES**

**November 2003**

**City of Seattle**

**Department of Planning and Development**

**Prepared in compliance with:**  
**State Environmental Policy Act**  
**Chapter 43.21, Revised Code of Washington**  
**Chapter 197-11, Washington Administrative Code**

# PREFACE

## Introduction

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2001, the City of Seattle Strategic Planning Office issued a SEPA Determination of Significance (DS) for a proposal to change several existing zoning provisions for a portion of Downtown Seattle. This proposal originates from concepts expressed in the neighborhood plans for the Denny Triangle neighborhood and the Commercial Core, as well as the plan prepared by the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group (DUCPG). Numerous discussions between neighborhood representatives and City staff since 1999 have helped define a proposal that is being advanced for further discussion and decisionmaking.

## EIS ORGANIZATION

This EIS is organized as follows: **Chapter 1** provides an overview of the proposal, impacts and mitigation measures; **Chapter 2** contains a description of the alternatives; and **Chapter 3** contains impact analysis for the elements of the environment identified in the EIS scope. The elements of the environment studied for this proposal include: Population/Employment, Housing, Land Use, Height/Bulk/Scale, Historic Preservation, Public Views and Aesthetics, Climate—Shadows and Wind, Pedestrian Amenities and Open Space, Transportation, Parking, Energy, Water Utilities and Sewers/Stormdrains.

## SEPA NON-PROJECT REVIEW

Pursuant to the State’s SEPA requirements, this environmental impact statement has been prepared to examine the potential for environmental impacts from this proposal. This is a “non-project” proposal in that it involves decisions on policies, plans or regulations rather than a single site-specific project. In this case, the proposal is for changes to regulations in the Land Use Code. The analysis is intended to describe how the proposed regulatory changes would affect future long-term development patterns, and whether those changes would result in significant adverse impacts. The intent of this EIS is to provide substantive analysis of impact implications (at a programmatic level of detail), to aid in making final decisions on the proposal.

The State’s SEPA rules and handbook provide for flexibility in the content and formatting of environmental review for non-project proposals, because details about the proposal are typically limited. Topics that should be addressed include: background, objectives, existing conditions, description of the proposal and alternatives, and environmental impact analysis. The level of analysis should be consistent with the specificity of the proposal and available information.

Broad analyses of non-project proposals can facilitate “phased review” by addressing bigger-picture concerns and allowing review of future proposals to focus on a smaller range of more specific concerns. This means that future proposals in the study area could incorporate or refer to portions of this EIS to fulfill their SEPA requirements. This could increase the efficiency of environmental review and expedite permitting processes.

## FACT SHEET

<b>Project Title</b>	Downtown Seattle Height and Density Changes
<b>Nature and Location of Proposal</b>	<p>This EIS examines four alternatives that cover a range of possible actions for the City Council’s consideration. Three of the alternatives consist of different combinations of increases in allowable maximum heights and densities (volumes) of buildings in several Downtown zones. A “No Action” Alternative is also included to assess what is likely to occur over time under the current Land Use Code.</p> <p>The area affected by the proposal includes portions of the Denny Triangle, Commercial Core and Belltown neighborhoods within Downtown, but does not include the retail core (zoned DRC), the International District, or Pioneer Square neighborhoods.</p> <p>Alternative 1 (High End Height and Density Increase) would increase height and density provisions in portions of Downtown zoned Downtown Office Core 1 and 2 (DOC 1, DOC 2), and Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC). The proposed density changes would increase allowable densities by 3 or 4 FAR (floor area ratio), equivalent to three or four times the property area of a given site. Within the affected area, maximum heights under Alternative 1 would increase by up to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>135 feet in the central DOC 1 zone;</li><li>100 feet in all of the northern DOC 2 and DMC zones in the Denny Triangle;</li><li>40 and 48 feet (approximately 30 percent increase) in the central DMC zones along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue between Pike and Virginia Streets, and in the Western Avenue vicinity, respectively; and</li><li>72 feet (30 percent increase) in the southern DOC 2 zone, and the DMC zone along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue between Union and Columbia, adjacent to the central office core.</li></ul> <p>The other alternatives consist of height and density increases in fewer areas or lesser amounts of change. Alternative 2 (Concentrated Office Core) would limit changes to the Downtown Office Core zones. Alternative 3 (Residential Emphasis) would increase height and density in most of the office core zones, but would re-orient zoning in some areas to better encourage housing production.</p>
<b>Proponent</b>	City of Seattle
<b>Lead Agency</b>	City of Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000 Seattle, WA 98104-5070
<b>Responsible Official</b>	Diane Sugimura
<b>Date of Implementation</b>	The City Council anticipates making decisions on this proposal in 2004.

<b>Contact Person</b>	Dennis Meier City of Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000 Seattle, WA 98104-5070 206-684-8270
<b>Required Approvals</b>	Actions on the proposal will require approval by the City Council.
<b>EIS Authors and Principal Contributors</b>	<p><b>Primary author, EIS coordination</b> City of Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development staff: Dennis Meier, Gordon Clowers, Lish Whitson</p> <p><b>Real Estate/Economic consultants</b> Craig Kinzer &amp; Associates The Seneca Group Cushman &amp; Wakefield</p> <p><b>Transportation consultant</b> Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade &amp; Douglas, Inc.</p> <p><b>Urban Design consultant</b> Otak, Inc.</p>
<b>Location of Background Data</b>	City of Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000 Seattle, WA 98104-5070
<b>DEIS Date of Issuance</b>	November 7, 2003
<b>Date Comments are Due</b>	January 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2004
<b>Public Hearing</b>	A public hearing on the Draft EIS is tentatively scheduled for December 10th, at the Seattle Police Department's West Precinct building at 810 Virginia Street (check <a href="http://www.seattle.gov/dpd">www.seattle.gov/dpd</a> for up-to-date meeting information).
<b>Nature and Date of Final Action</b>	The City Council is expected to take action in 2004 on the proposal to amend the allowable heights and densities within portions of Downtown.
<b>Cost of Draft EIS</b>	Copies of the Draft EIS are available for public review at several branches of the Seattle Public Library. Interested parties may purchase copies of the Draft EIS for \$10 at DPD, 20 <sup>th</sup> floor Key Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue. An appendix volume of technical analyses is also available for a purchase price of \$10. Please send your request to the Dept. of Planning and Development (address above) with a check made payable to "City of Seattle."

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